

## Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Coordinating Committee

### Minutes of July 13, 2001 Meeting

#### Attendance

The NIH Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Coordinating Committee met on July 13, 2001 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the Gateway Building, Room 525. Ronald Abeles (OD/OBSSR), Chairperson, presided. Members and alternate members in attendance were: Sonia Arteaga (OD/OBSSR), Chris Bachrach (NICHD), Yvonne Bryan (NINR), Bruce Cuthbert (NIMH), Emmeline Edwards (NINDS), Larry Fine (OBSSR), Sandy Garfield (NIDDK), Susan Martin (NIAAA), Mike Oberdorfer (NEI), Georgeanne Patmios (OBSSR), Peter Scheidt (NICHD), Martina Vogel-Taylor (OD/ODP), Molly Wagster (NIA), and Charles Wells (NIEHS).

Guests in attendance were Meredith Bosler (SRCD) and Kate Bachus (FBPCS).

#### **Presentation by Dr. Peter Scheidt, NICHD, on the status of the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children**

Compared to adults, children are at increased risk from environmental influences because of vulnerable developing systems and enhanced exposure. Observed effects from low-level contaminants, such as lead, and from other influences, such as poverty, raise concerns about a number of environmental factors and their effects on the health and well being of children. New methods and technologies permit the measurement of low level and chronic exposures and influences, and recent advances in genomics permit the study of possible gene-environment interactions.

In 1998, the Developmental Disabilities Work Group of the President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children recommended a longitudinal cohort study of environmental impacts on children to identify and quantify these risks. The proposed study was to be of sufficient size and design to identify subtle, but important, effects of low level environmental exposures, as well as other biological, social factors that may impact children's health. In addition, the study was to become a valuable resource for future investigations.

On October 17, 2000, President Clinton signed into the law the [Children's Health Act of 2000](#) (PDF format 451.4KB). Title X of the Act lays the groundwork for a major national study of the impact of the environment on child health. Under the auspices of the Task Force, investigators at several federal agencies, especially NICHD, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Center for Environmental Health (CDC) and NIEHS have begun work to plan and implement this proposed study. Planning groups, comprised of federal scientists, non-federal organizations with special interest in this project and other experts, are currently in the process of defining specific study hypotheses, study design, technology applications, and ethical guidelines. Methodological development and pilot studies are planned for FY 2001-03, and initiation of the study is anticipated in 2004.

If organizations are interested in participating, please contact the study coordinator at [nichdcohort@mail.nih.gov](mailto:nichdcohort@mail.nih.gov) who will add your name to the listserv created to communicate about this study. More information about this study can be found at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/despr/cohort/index.htm>. Finally, Dr. Scheidt's presentation to the BSSR-CC is attached below as a PowerPoint file.



Spring01pres2.ppt

## **Presentation by Dr. Larry Fine, OBSSR, on Exploring the Relationship between Educational Attainment and Health**

Dr. Larry Fine, on detail to OBSSR from CDC/NIOSH where he was Acting Director, presented this topic to the group as an initiative under consideration by OBSSR as a potential NIH-wide research activity. While the association between education and health has been well documented, little is known about the mechanisms through which education influences risk for disease and death. Dr. Fine presented an overview of what is known on this topic and then detailed a few possible research topics NIH might consider pursuing. Points raised in the discussion included a necessary focus on selection issues, the crude way education is currently defined in health surveys, and the need to include education researchers in any activity since they have unpacked education more finely than have health researchers. Next steps discussed were to: consider including these issues in the meetings scheduled to discuss a potential Program Announcement on the social and cultural dimensions of health ("Sociocultural PA"); invite interested Program Staff to meet informally with Dr. Fine to discuss the topic; consider forming a new NIH interest group on this topic; and invite academic experts to discuss the topic with interested NIH Program Staff. Dr. Fine's presentation to the BSSR-CC is attached below as a PowerPoint file.



Unbundling  
EducationJuly13.ppt.

## **Update on Results from the June 2000 NIH conference on "Towards Higher Levels of Analysis: Progress and Promise in Research on the Social and Cultural Dimensions of Health"**

The final report from this conference is available on the Internet at [http://obssr.od.nih.gov/Conf\\_Wkshp/higherlevel/sociocultural-draft.pdf](http://obssr.od.nih.gov/Conf_Wkshp/higherlevel/sociocultural-draft.pdf) and hard copies of the report will soon be available. This Spring, OBSSR approached the IC Directors asking each to nominate Program Staff to serve on a planning committee to develop a Program Announcement as a follow up to this June 2000 conference. For an update on this activity, see the attached memo sent by Dr. Paula Skedsvold to the BSSR CC.



sociocultural PA.msg

## **BSSR Lecture Series for Fall 2001**

The Fall 2001 Behavioral and Social Sciences Lecture Series will honor the contributions of Matilda White Rile to the NIH. The first lecture in this series is:

*Biocultural Dynamics of the Life Course: A Difficult Journey from the Third to Fourth Age?*

Paul B. Baltes, Ph.D.

Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Berlin, Germany)

September 14, 2001, 3-5:00 p.m.

Natcher Building (45), Rooms F1 and F2

A reception in honor of Matilda White Riley will be held immediately following the lecture in the Atrium.

## **Change in Schedule for BSSR CC Monthly Meetings**

In order to accommodate the schedule of Dr. Raynard Kington, Associate Director of NIH for Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, BSSR CC meetings will be held on the **first** Friday of

the month beginning in September, 2001. Meetings have been previously held on the second Friday of the month.

**Next BSSR CC meeting**

September 7, 2001  
Gateway Building, Room 525  
7201 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda MD

(there will be no meeting in August)